



Bright Lights, Big City, Big Dreams

As a young girl in Alabama, Wendy Hobbie had visions of success in the world of dance. Empowered by faith and motivated by the promise of hard work, she eventually set course for New York City to pursue her dreams. Soon she found that her journey would also include a valuable relationship with a staffing company. Meet the 2017 National Employee of the Year—and let her story inspire you.

By Michelle Snyder

When you meet Wendy Hobbie, you're instantly drawn in by her infectious smile and warm personality. She's energetic, sincere, grateful, smart, and talented—which is why Michael DiPeri of HMG Plus, the New York-based staffing company that employs Hobbie, was so thrilled to see her named 2017 National Staffing Employee of the Year.

Hobbie "smiles with her eyes, and it's contagious," says DiPeri, who can also attest to her strong work ethic, reliability, and enthusiasm. DiPeri cheered alongside nearly 2,000 industry professionals as she accepted her award from ASA at Staffing World® in San Diego. >>>



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The National Staffing Employee of the Year program is sponsored by CareerBuilder, an ASA corporate partner and the association's research partner.

Meet the 2017 National Staffing Employee of the Year All-Stars

ASA honors five National Staffing Employee of the Year All-Stars—one from each staffing industry sector: engineering, IT, and scientific; health care; industrial; office-clerical and administrative; and professional-managerial. These talented employees—each with his or her own inspiring staffing success story—serve as industry ambassadors alongside National Staffing Employee of the Year Wendy Hobbie, who is also the industrial sector All-Star.

“ASA congratulates all of the industry sector All-Stars for embodying the opportunities of working in the staffing industry,” says Richard Wahlquist, ASA president and chief executive officer. “Each of these talented individuals has a special success story to tell on how staffing has empowered them, both personally and professionally, by providing work schedule flexibility and a bridge to permanent positions, when desired.”

Here’s a look at this year’s National Staffing Employee of the Year All-Stars. Learn more about this recognition program at americanstaffing.net/awards. Nominations are due Aug. 1.



Engineering, IT, and Scientific Sector All-Star Sharon DeWitt

DeWitt’s partnership with Chicago-based LaSalle Network provides her with the flexibility to travel, continue her education, and volunteer in her community. She generously gives of her free time, leading pro bono IT engagements as an account director with Taproot, and has worked on projects for several Chicagoland organizations, such as Legal Council for Health Justice and Meals on Wheels Chicago. She also takes part in several fundraisers each year and does hands-on volunteer work at a variety of homeless shelters and hospitals.

While working with her staffing firm, DeWitt has broadened her skills and knowledge with an APICS certification in production and inventory management, as well as participated in other project management programs, such as those offered by the Center for Creative Leadership. She currently is a contract program manager focused on enterprise process transformation with Reyes Holdings.



Health Care Sector All-Star Brenda Riser

Riser, a pharmacist and 13-year employee of Rx relief, has worked on more than 500 assignments during her tenure with the staffing company. She currently is on assignment with Valley Children’s Hospital—a top-rated U.S. children’s hospital in Fresno, CA—and has worked in a variety of health care environments during her relationship with the staffing company. Riser first learned of Rx relief while still in pharmacy school in the 1980s, when she met the staffing company’s vice president. Thanks to that connection, she later engaged with the firm as a contract employee.

As a single parent, Riser values the flexibility contract work can offer. She says it allows her to enjoy more time with her daughter and mother. As a tight three-generation unit, they enjoy many adventures and travel together extensively.



Office-Clerical and Administrative Sector All-Star Dominic Berrini

After pursuing a job as a teacher, Berrini realized it wasn’t the right career for him—so he turned to Westaff, in Burlington, VT, for work. He was placed in a variety of temporary assignments, and bridged to a permanent job at Burton—a worldwide manufacturer of snowboards, bindings, boots, outerwear, and accessories.

Berrini enjoyed being a temporary employee because it gave him access to a variety of companies and work experiences—which allowed him to figure out the best fit for him. Working as a staffing employee also provided him with the flexibility to pursue his interest in music. Berrini regularly plays guitar and sings at Burlington-area venues. In addition to his All-Star honor, he was named the 2016 Westaff Associate of the Year.



Professional- Managerial Sector All-Star Jeffrey Burt

Burt first joined Corporate Brokers in 2010 to pursue a contract opportunity as a senior art director with Bank of America in Wilmington, DE. Fast forward to today, and he remains on assignment with the bank’s in-house marketing agency.

Burt enjoys the flexibility that staffing offers to freelance, travel, read, spend time with family, and pursue creative interests—such as drawing, making clocks, and photography. He has decided to invest in this long-term relationship not only because he enjoys the assignment, but also because he likes the work environment, his colleagues, and his partnership with Corporate Brokers.

**Go to americanstaffing.net/awards
to nominate your staffing star!**

Hobbie's inspiring story begins in her hometown of Montgomery, AL, where she and her siblings were raised by a single mother in a home that was often short on money, but always had an abundance of faith and love, Hobbie explains.

"My mom worked very hard to provide for our family. As I got older, a lot of times when she worked late I'd cook dinner for my siblings and help my younger brothers with their homework," Hobbie says. Her grandmother also was—and continues to be—a strong influence in her life. As a preteen, Hobbie often would accompany her grandmother to her job cleaning houses, and she experienced first-hand how hard her grandmother worked and her commitment to doing a good job for her clients. From an early age, her grandmother instilled in Hobbie the importance of integrity, a good work ethic, and a strong religious foundation.

Pursuing a Childhood Dream

As far back as she can remember, Hobbie dreamed of becoming a professional dancer. "I was always drawn to music videos, particularly ones that had choreographed dance moves in them," Hobbie says. "I would eventually pick up the moves and dance along with them in my room."

Her natural gift for performing was apparent at an early age, but because her family didn't have the money for dance lessons, Hobbie didn't have the opportunity to cultivate her gift until she was a young adult. As soon as she began earning a paycheck, she invested in dance lessons. After working very hard for several years, Hobbie knew the next step toward making her dance dreams a reality was to pack her bags, say goodbye to loved ones, and make the 1,000-mile trek to New York City.

It was a difficult decision for Hobbie, but she knew it was the right one—now she could learn from some of the best dance instructors in the world and work in a city teeming with opportunities in her field. After living in New York as a self-described "starving artist" and working in the restaurant business to make ends meet, Hobbie discovered the staffing industry.

Through a website that provides New York City-area performers with audition information as well as side gig opportunities, Hobbie first learned about HMG Plus—a boutique hospitality staffing company in Manhattan owned by DiPeri and his wife Karen DiPeri. Hobbie needed flexible opportunities that could fit into her already-packed schedule of dance classes, auditions, and performances.

"I had no idea that the type of hospitality work and schedule flexibility I was interested in even existed. Working in a restaurant didn't give me the time to do what I needed to do to become a professional dancer and actor," she explains.

Excited about the possibilities, Hobbie contacted HMG Plus. After interviewing her, the HMG Plus team decided that she was a perfect fit. "Wendy is a rare find," Michael DiPeri says. The staffing company quickly put her to work as a server, and later as a captain, in corporate and private home environments. She is now one of the firm's best and most-requested service professionals—and is even part of the team who interviews potential candidates. "Wendy embodies our corporate culture. She is fair, has integrity, and is positive. She's very competent, and our clients love her," says Karen DiPeri.

This respect and appreciation is mutual. When addressing the crowd at Staffing World as the 2017 National Staffing Employee of the Year, Hobbie expressed heartfelt thanks "to the HMG Plus team for putting up with my crazy schedule and for being so welcoming—and especially Karen and Mike DiPeri for your kindness and generosity and for being such encouraging people. The zeal that you have for your vision of HMG Plus is definitely infectious."



Hobbie's JAG Success Story



After Wendy Hobbie was named 2017 National Staffing Employee of the Year, ASA learned that she was a Jobs for America's Graduates student while in high school in Montgomery, AL.

Hobbie says her experiences with JAG helped improve her public speaking skills and cultivate her self-confidence—both critical to successful performers. She credits her JAG teacher, Paul Sloane, for championing her professional dreams.

In 2016, ASA and JAG announced a strategic partnership to help prepare at-risk youth across the nation for their future roles in the workforce. Find out how your staffing company can get involved in JAG at the local level. Visit americanstaffing.net/JAG.

Taking Flexibility Even Further

The flexibility her staffing assignments provide also allows this remarkable young woman to share her gifts with others. Hobbie currently teaches hip-hop

Do You Know the Next National Staffing Employee of the Year?



The National Staffing Employee of the Year is a temporary or contract employee who has an extraordinary staffing success story to share. Learn more about how to nominate one of your company's temporary or contract employees at americanstaffing.net/awards. **Nominations are due Aug. 1.**

The 2018 National Staffing Employee of the Year honoree will receive national recognition, as well as an awards package, including:

- All-expenses-paid deluxe travel and hotel accommodations for Staffing World® 2017, Oct. 24–26 in Chicago
- \$5,000 gift card
- Cover story in *Staffing Success*, the flagship magazine of ASA
- News release coverage, as well as coverage in the *Staffing Today* newsletter and other ASA media
- Recognition during National Staffing Employee Week, Sept. 18–24, which celebrates the contributions of the millions of temporary and contract employees on assignment each business day

Learn more and read about past National Staffing Employee of the Year honorees at americanstaffing.net/NSEY.

dance to students, ages 3 to 15, at the Lexington School for the Deaf in nearby Queens. She also has taught dance to blind children and teenagers at Camp Helen Keller in Farmingdale, NY.

“We crank up the music, and it almost feels like one big party filled with self-expression and learning. The feeling you get when the kids feel the music is incredible,” Hobbie says. “There is nothing more fulfilling than helping others realize their potential and experience true moments of joy.”

But a recent request from the Lexington School surprised Hobbie. The school asked her to coach its cheerleading squad. Why this was a surprise: Hobbie has never been a cheerleader. But never one to back down from a challenge, she accepted and has made it her business to learn quickly and continue serving the children she cares about so deeply. “I’m constantly realizing that cheerleading is very different than dance. Some of the teens are

giving me pointers as far as choreography goes, so it’s collaborative work. We have a big tournament coming up...Lexington came in first place last year in cheerleading, so I have some pretty big shoes to fill,” Hobbie says.

Since moving to New York, Hobbie also has taught Sunday school to underprivileged students in low-income neighborhoods through a local faith-based organization. The group aims to provide a variety of services to children living in adverse conditions in metropolitan areas. Hobbie has developed strong bonds with these young people, whose challenges mirror some of the same challenges she experienced growing up.

Establishing Valuable Relationships

Especially since she is so far from home, Hobbie appreciates the relationships she has forged with her HMG Plus family. As part of preparing Hobbie’s nomination for the National Staffing Employee of the Year competition, the teen son of Michael and Karen DiPeri volunteered to produce a video about Hobbie’s story. And when the staffing company learned Hobbie had received the top honor, the HMG Plus team surprised her with balloons, flowers, and an enormous congratulatory poster at the office. They also celebrated her contributions and talent throughout National Staffing Employee Week.

Last October, Michael and Karen DiPeri were in the front row when Hobbie was honored at Staffing World. Even though it was a personally challenging time for their family, the staffing company owners knew they couldn’t miss it; they felt strongly that they had to be there in person to support Hobbie and see her receive her award. And just like a family member, Karen DiPeri was in tears when Hobbie addressed the crowd on stage. “I felt a tremendous sense of pride that Wendy was getting recognized in such a grand way and was treated like a rock star. She deserved it.”

Michael DiPeri beamed with pride, too. “It was like my favorite niece getting an award. Wendy is like family.” ■

Michelle Snyder is director, public relations, for ASA. Send your feedback on this article to success@americanstaffing.net. Engage with ASA on social media—go to americanstaffing.net/social.